Final Synopsis

MAINSTREAM MEDIA AND RHETORIC: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PRIME-TIME DEBATES DURING PANDEMIC

Submitted to
MGM University, Aurangabad

For Ph. D. Degree
in
Journalism & Mass Communication

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
College of Journalism & Mass Communication

By
ZAINAB MINHAJ KHAN

Under Guidance of
DR. TANVEER AHEMAD

December 2024

Title of Ph.D. Thesis	Mainstream Media & Rhetoric: A Discourse Analysis of Prime-Time Debates during Pandemic
Name of Researcher	Zainab Minhaj Khan
Name of Guide	Dr. Tanveer Ahemad (Associate Professor) MGM University, Aurangabad
Place of Research	Aurangabad, Maharashtra
Submission Date	December 2024

Signature of Researcher

Signature of Research Supervisor

1. INTRODUCTION

The present study focuses on “Mainstream Media & Rhetoric: A Discourse Analysis of Prime-Time T.V. Debates during the Pandemic.” The omnipresence of media in the life of common people is significant in affirming attitudes and opinions that are already established. It can also affirm latent attitudes and “activate” them, prompting people to act or certainly react to the contemporary social issues.

As mobile Internet usage has grown, conventional mainstream media have evolved into new mainstream media, and these media are now more influential than ever in shaping public opinion, influencing media perception, and gaining credibility. Credibility, readership, and news coverage are a few of the variables that affect this transition.

In addition, the mainstream media is used to expressing strong emotions and extreme opinions when covering events for the first time. They also purposefully exploit the curiosity of their audience by highlighting opposing viewpoints in news reports and using a dramatic spread effect to appeal to their preferences, attract attention, and sway public opinion.

Rhetoric is the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques. It is the language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect, but which is often regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content. Prime Time is the time when the largest number of people are watching or listening the media broadcast and the debates held during this time are featuring opinions from candidates that are relevant contributors to a particular topic of public interest, especially sensitive and serious discussion with overviews as well as perspectives.

Mainstream media has a great influence on masses that reflect and shape prevailing flow of public thoughts and opinions. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that witnessed a catastrophic condition globally, affecting the economic, social, psychological, and other aspects of human

life, there has been some additional social events which took place in prime-time debates of mainstream media. Media channels performed a striking role in stimulating the public discourse occurring during this duration. The role of media channels had a tremendous rise in public discourse due to the 24 x 7 involvement of the viewers amidst the lockdown and pandemic.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The mainstream media has captivated the audience with its dominant persuasion of opinions and biases to divert them from issues of national importance and keeps them stranded in public discourse.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

- To define the art of persuasion of mainstream media
- To understand mainstream media in initiating public discourse
- To analyse the rhetorical elements of primetime debate content during the pandemic
- To compare the topics dealt by NDTV & Republic TV channels in TV debates

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do the mainstream media persuade the audience?
- What is the relation between the content of primetime debates and public discourse?
- Are there any prevalence of rhetorical elements in the T.V. debates occurred during the pandemic?
- What is the difference between the content of T.V. debates dealt by Republic T.V & NDTV channels?

1.4 NATURE OF THE STUDY

The study is descriptive in nature due to the paucity of research in this field. With the growing popularity of rhetoric and public discourse, particularly among mainstream media, the issue under research is unique in the Indian context. Two phases of the study are being undertaken. The initial phase involved generating the debate transcripts and observing the audio-visuals for further analysis. Text transcriptions are used to display the debate

conversations. Inferences about the analysis have been made during the second phase. Discourse analysis has been employed to conduct the analysis of the generated data.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research will pave way for performing the discourse analysis of the mainstream media content, rhetoric, and prime time debates. The consequences of mainstream media on public discourse are conceptualized in terms of the changes in the dialects of public discourse and public opinion resulting from the viewership. Living through the COVID-19 pandemic had induced innumerable issues ranging from social, political, religious, public entertainment and health, etc. Like the virus itself, the issues that the pandemic raised had moved targets with factors and conditions changing over time, often due to unprecedented necessity. The research will conduct discourse analysis on the data collected from debates of Republic TV and NDTV only.

The study will develop a sense of maturity and influence the people to perform a responsible participation on media public discourse decreasing the number of transformed rhetoric and social controversies.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

2.1.1. Epistemology:

This will study the nature, origin, and scope of knowledge, epistemic justification, the rationality of belief and various related social issues encompassed during the pandemic.

There are two elements in epistemology which will support the study that are identified as Rhetorical Epistemology and Interpretative Empirical Epistemology. Rhetorical epistemology lays out formal, logical and global view of phenomena with particular concern for persuasion

through speech. It draws Greco-Roman foundations from Aristotle and Cicero, whereas interpretative empirical epistemology includes structure and symbolic interaction during discourse.

2.1.2. Reception Model:

Media messages are always open and ‘polysemic’ (having multiple meanings) and are interpreted according to the context and the culture of receivers. This model has its origins in discourse analysis. Among the forerunners of reception analysis was a persuasive variant of critical theory formulated by Stuart Hall (1980) which emphasized the stages of transformation through which media messages passes on the way from its origins to its reception and interpretation. The literature and its polysemic nature obtained from mainstream media channels (Republic TV and NDTV) will be analyzed on the grounds of this model.

2.1.3. Agenda Setting Theory:

Agenda-setting describes the "ability of the media to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda". The study of agenda-setting describes the way media attempts to influence viewers, and establish a hierarchy of news prevalence. The agenda-setting by media is driven by the media's bias on things such as politics, economy and culture, etc. Agenda-setting has phases that need to be in a specific order in order for it to succeed. The transformed rhetoric of prime-time debates will be analysed on the basis of this theory.

2.1.4. Two-Step Flow Theory:

The concept of the ‘two-step flow of communication’ suggests that the flow of information and influence from the mass media to their audiences involves two steps: from the source to certain individuals (i.e., the opinion leaders) and from them to the public. Katz and Lazarsfeld

(1955) developed this model of a two-step flow of communication to emphasize the importance of interpersonal communications. The two-step flow of communication begins with messages disseminated through the mass media. However, rather than being directly received by an audience of individuals who are attentive, the messages are received by a layer of opinion leaders who are interested and engaged in public affairs. Opinion leaders absorb the messages from the mass media, recast and reinterpret the messages, and through personal connections, pass them along to an audience that is often distracted, unaware, or uninterested in political matters. The role of Journalists of Republic TV & NDTV (predominantly performing the role of opinion makers or influencers) in initiating, fuelling and disseminating rhetoric through media channels like Republic TV and NDTV in public discourse can be analyzed.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.2.1. Discourse Analysis:

Discourse Analysis is an analysis of written, vocal, or sign languages use or any significant semiotic event. It analyzes language use "beyond the sentence boundary "and "naturally occurring" language use. It caters to decide whether a particular feature is relevant to the specification required.

"Coherence "is an element of discourse analysis which describes the properties of written texts. It scrutinizes the ways a text makes sense to readers and writer through the relevance and accessibility of concepts, ideas and theories to the words, sentences, paragraphs and write ups.

This method of analysis has been adopted in the research to identify the relevance of content on mainstream media giving rise to social controversies within the public discourse and rhetoric during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2.2. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data usually applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts. The research has closely examined the data obtained from prime time debates of Republic TV and NDTV to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly.

2.2.3. Textual analysis

Textual analysis is a methodology that involves understanding language, symbols, and/or pictures present in texts to gain information regarding how people make sense out of it and communicate. Visual, written, or spoken messages provide clues to ways through which communication may be understood. Often the messages are understood as influenced by and reflective of larger social structures. For example, messages reflect and/or may challenge historical, cultural, political, ethical contexts for which they exist. The study has performed textual analysis of the data obtained from prime time debates of Republic TV and NDTV.

2.2.4. Content Analysis:

This is a study of documents and communication artifacts (text formats, pictures, audio or video) to examine patterns in communication in a replicable and systematic manner. The research carried out systematic reading/observation and analysis of content from prime time debates Republic TV & NDTV during COVID 19 (March 2020 – March 2021) whether it indicates the presence of meaningful pieces of content or not which induced the public discourse and rhetoric on the mainstream media.

3. HISTORY, BACKGROUND, DEVELOPMENT & CURRENT SCENARIO

3.1 HISTORICAL APPROACHES OF RHETORICAL THEORY:

The study of rhetoric combines the analysis of ideational framing with the practical requirement that authors and speakers influence audiences, making it a fruitful approach to consider issue framing. By acknowledging the practical need to convince people in contextual contexts, rhetoric serves as a means of explaining policy problem framing. The convoluted and perceptive issue of modern slavery and human trafficking is simplified by rhetorical demands to influence an audience of supporters.

According to research, public discourse simplifies difficult situations into simpler explanations, even while the substantive problem is a complex combination of several concerns. States, corporations in the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) frame modern slavery through rhetoric. The difference nowadays is distance. And rhetoric is the domain of politics which decodes that difference. The appropriate analytical term for situated speech that combines argumentative and figurative attempts to persuade audiences regarding issue interpretations and potential solutions is rhetoric*(Turnbull & Broad, 2022)*

3.2. MEDIA RHETORIC

The term "Media Rhetoric" refers to a paramount stage in the evolution of civilization and human communication, when media started to play a major role in rhetoric. It briefs the way media incorporates rhetorical discourses into its own content and how they use rhetorical techniques in their everyday operations.

3.3 DISCOURSE: HISTORY & CURRENT SCENARIO

‘Discursus,’ a Latin word meaning "written or spoken communication or debate," is where the term discourse originated. According to Hamuddin, Budianto's (2012) "Discourse" is a multifaceted and enormously complicated interpretation. Since the term "discourse" was introduced to modern science and its many broad connotations, many earlier research has noted how ambiguous it has become. It also refers to the manner in which a certain group uses language, dialect, and acceptable remarks in addition to speech style.

3.4 PRIMETIME DEBATES & DISCOURSE

Every mediated debate involves a "politics of truth," which is essential to the structure of public discourse. The politics of truth becomes more conspicuous when the sphere of politics is extraneous in the argument of the debate. Undoubtedly, there is a close connection between the democratic possibilities of mediated discourse and the politics of truth. If the politics of truth permits the interpretation of the meaning horizon around the debate issue, then evaluating the boundaries of this horizon that is, what it admits and rejects as knowledge allows us to evaluate the deliberative ability of the discourse. This is the ability of the discussion to expose its subject to logical criticism by exposing the basis of all pertinent information, regardless of its status of power, to rigorous examination.

4. DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

4.1. Data Collection:

This study employs a discourse analysis approach to validate the theoretical model and analytically find the answers to the research questions among the constructs. Out of 158 debates broadcasted on the two selected channels and five selected themes of the research, 10 distinctive primetime debates from two most popular English language mainstream media channels viz. Republic TV and NDTV with particular prime-time debate shows viz. “The Debate with Arnab Goswami and Left, Right & Centre” have been chosen respectively

through thematic analysis with a focus on subjects related to public entertainment, religion, social issues, politics, and health. Most prevailing themes with repetitive coverage were selected amongst the debates occurred during the defined period of research. The qualitative review of the selected debate audio-visuals as well as transcripts were accommodated to confirm the research questions and identify missing factors that may influence public discourse through mainstream media. The speech of the debate anchors and speakers were keenly observed and decoded in the rhetorical context of the theoretical constructs that may arouse public discourse.

4.2. Data Analysis:

Discourse Analysis has been employed to determine the distributional characteristics of each of the research objectives. The research performs textual and discourse analysis of specified **10 debates** transcripts of **63,208 words (407 audio minutes)** and its use in constructing meaning, express opinions, and shaping social relationships as well as power dynamics during the prime time debates. The goal of discourse analysis is to understand the relationships between language, culture, and society, as well as how language is used to achieve particular social and political effects. After observing the debates and referring the transcripts a satisfactory investigation was conducted based on the research questions to perform the discourse analysis in the collected data. Lastly inferences were drawn based on the analysis of the data.

TABLE 1: Number of primetime debates on distinctive topics during 2020

SR. NO	TOPICS	NO. OF DEBATES
1.	Anti-opposition	**49**
2.	Banking	**02**
3.	Bollywood	**03**
4.	CAA	**28**
5.	Corona	**21**
6.	Crime & Justice	**24**
7.	Health & Safety	**01**
8.	International Affairs	**01**
9.	Lockdown	**06**
10.	Politics	**12**
11.	Pro-BJP	**09**
12.	Religion	**05**
13.	Society	**02**
14.	Nationalism	**16**

TABLE 2: Debate themes selected for analysis

SR. NO	THEME	TOPIC
1.	**Bollywood**	Sushant Singh Rajput Suicide Case
2.	**Religion**	Tablighi Jamaat
3.	**Social**	Imposing of First Lockdown
4.	**Political**	Kangana Vs Uddhav Thackray
5.	**Health**	Precautions for Corona Virus

Figure No. 1: Number of debates on distinctive topics during 2020

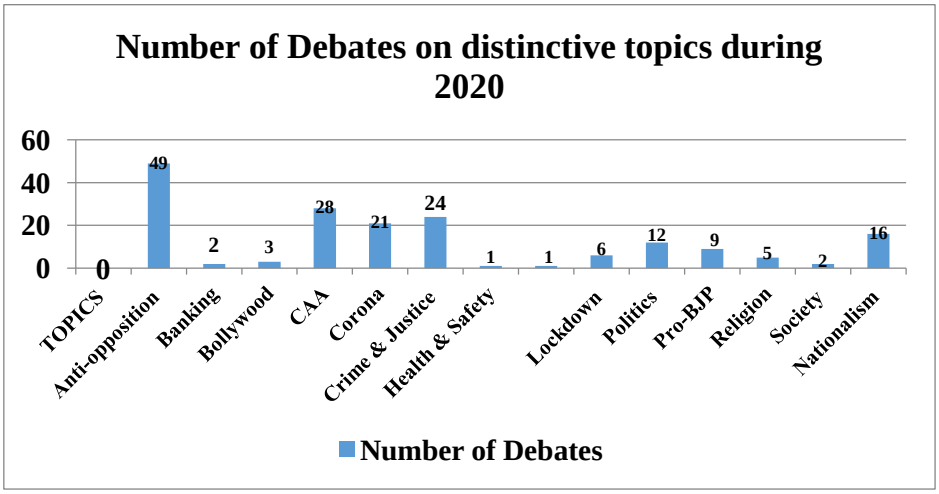


Table 3: Number of debates conducted by Republic T.V (The Debate with Arnab Goswami) on selected topics in 2020

Sr. No	TOPIC	No. of debates conducted by the channel
1.	Sushant Singh Rajput Suicide Case	**76**
2.	Tablighi Jamaat	**13**
3.	Imposing of First Lockdown	**15**
4.	Kangana Vs Uddhav Thackray	**12**
5.	Precautions for Corona Virus	**08**
TOTAL		**124**

Table 4: Number of debates conducted by NDTV (Left, Right & Centre) on selected topics in 2020

Sr. No	TOPIC	No. of debates conducted by the channel
1.	Sushant Singh Rajput Suicide Case	**07**
2.	Tablighi Jamaat	**05**
3.	Imposing of First Lockdown	**08**
4.	Kangana Vs Uddhav Thackray	**00**
5.	Precautions for Corona Virus	**14**
TOTAL		**34**

Figure No. 2: Republic TV Vs NDTV: Comparison of debate topics

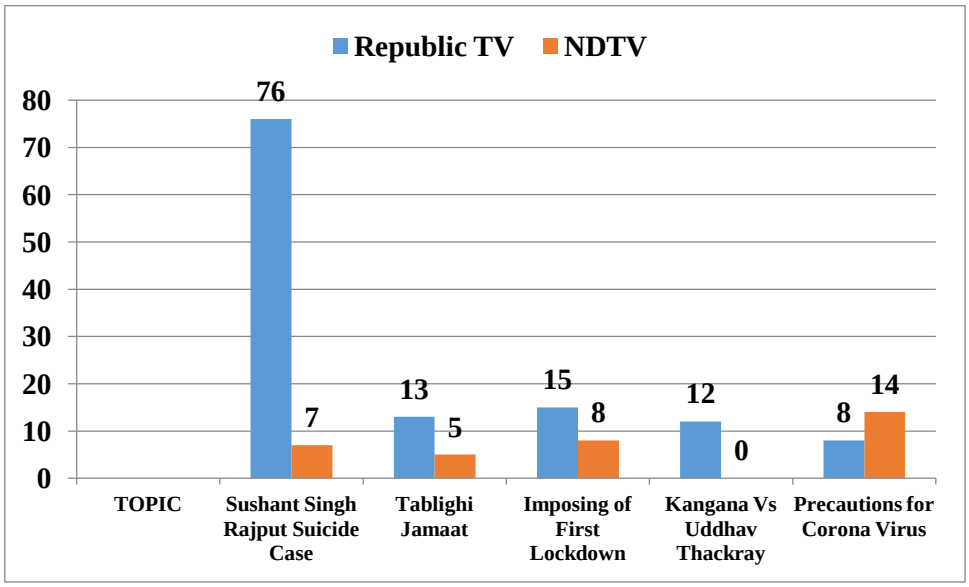


Table 5: Rhetorical Elements in Republic TV Debates

Sr. No	Debate	Word	Number of Repetitions	Rhetorical Element
1.	**As Sushant's Family Fights For Justice, MVA Slanders Late Actor**	attack	**27**	**Pathos**
2.		justice	**24**	**Ethos**
3.		shame	**10**	**Pathos**
4.		abuse	**10**	**Pathos**
5.		murder	**8**	**Ethos**
6.		Mumbai Police	**40**	**Ethos**
1.	**Nationwide Search for Tablighi Jamaat Attendees**	Tablighi	**79**	**Ethos**
2.		hiding	**59**	**Logos**
3.		maulana	**23**	**Ethos**
4.		muslims	**22**	**Pathos**
5.		mosques	**35**	**Pathos**
1.	**PM Modi Announces 21 Day Lockdown To Battle**	Prime Minister	**32**	**Ethos**
2.		Modi	**13**	**Ethos**
3.		nation	**14**	**Pathos**

4.	**CORONA VIRUS**	battle	**9**	**Pathos**
5.		21 days	**13**	**Pathos**
1.	**Kangana vs Uddhav Shiv Sena Celebrates BMC Demolition Drive**	Uddhav Thackray	**28**	**Ethos**
2.		Kangana Ranaut	**35**	**Ethos**
3.		Khan	**14**	**Ethos**
4.		Bachchan	**17**	**Ethos**
5.		shame	**10**	**Pathos**
6.		Shiv Sena	**16**	**Ethos**
1.	**Time To Contain COVID And Rebuild India**	Prime Minister	**32**	**Ethos**
2.		political	**16**	**Logos**
3.		country	**20**	**Pathos**
4.		viewers	**9**	**Pathos**
5.		debate	**17**	**Pathos**
6.		united	**10**	**Pathos**

Table 6: Rhetorical Elements in NDTV Debates

Sr. No	Debate	Word	Number of Repetitions	Rhetorical Elements applied
1.	**Ordeal For Migrants Drags On As Lockdown Extended**	crisis	**10**	**Pathos**
2.		migrants	**31**	**Pathos**
3.		lockdown	**10**	**Pathos**
4.		Congress	**10**	**Ethos**
5.		government	**22**	**Ethos**
6.		Prime Minister	**7**	**Ethos**
1.	**Delhi Mosque CORONA VIRUS scare Criminal Negligence And Excuses**	Tablighi Jamaat	**14**	**Pathos**
2.		criminal	**7**	**Logos**
3.		lockdown	**23**	**Pathos**
4.		Muslims	**16**	**Pathos**
5.		congregation	**13**	**Pathos**
1.		Prime Minister	**20**	**Ethos**

2.	**PM Modi Announces Complete Lockdown In India**	lockdown	**28**	**Logos**
3.		death	**7**	**Pathos**
1.	**Rhea Chakraborty Gets Bail Time To Call Out Shoot-And-Scoot Journalism**	bail	**23**	**Logos**
2.		Rhea	**25**	**Ethos**
3.		accused	**10**	**Pathos**
4.		allegation	**6**	**Logos**
5.		journalism	**9**	**Pathos**
6.		law	**17**	**Logos**
1.	**The Unexplained Maharashtra COVID Surge**	COVID	**13**	**Pathos**
2.		cases	**24**	**Logos**
3.		Maharashtra	**43**	**Ethos**
4.		Chief Minister	**11**	**Ethos**

Figure No 3: No. of Word Repetitions in Debate No.1

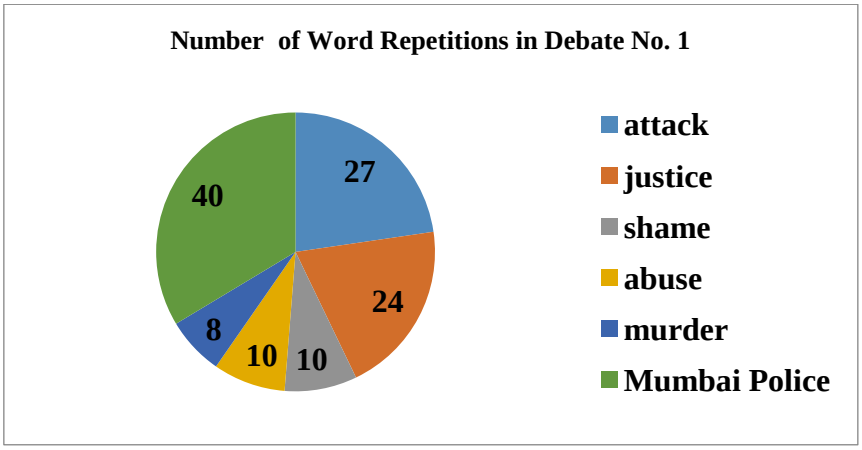


Figure No 4: No. of Word Repetitions in Debate No.2

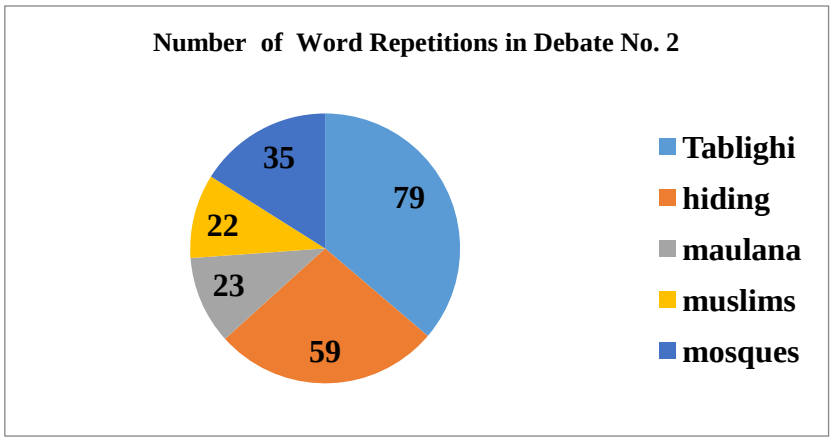


Figure No 5: No. of Word Repetitions in Debate No.3

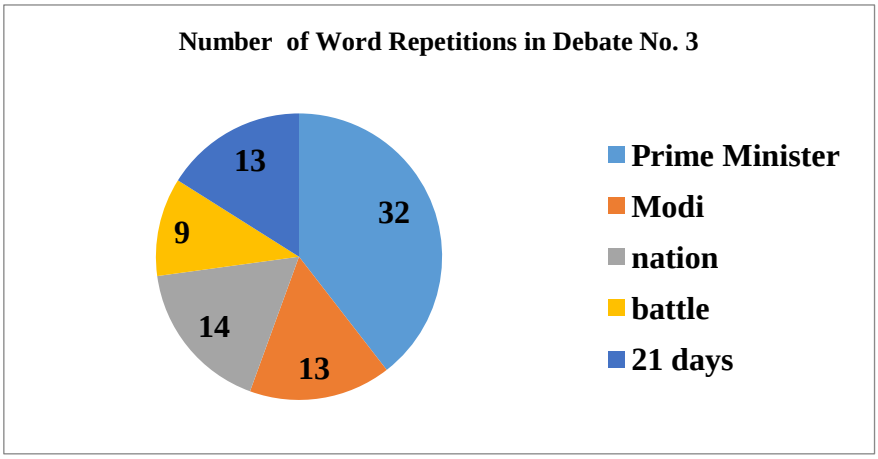


Figure No 6: No. of Word Repetitions in Debate No.4

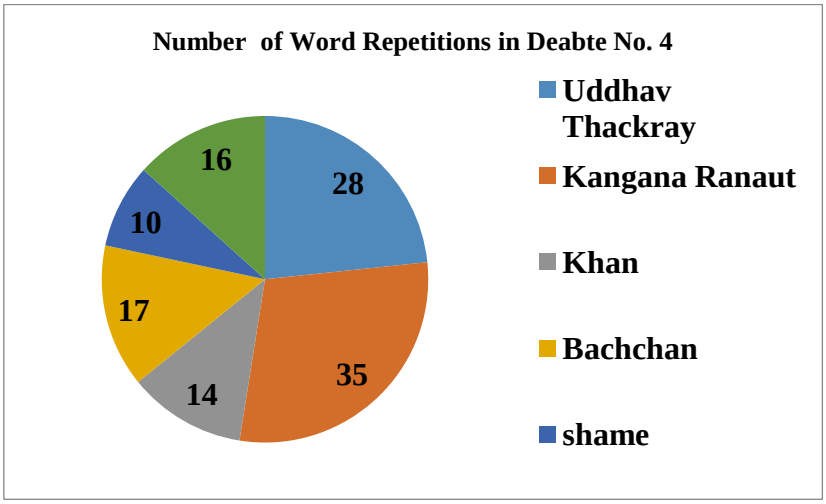


Figure No 7: No. of Word Repetitions in Debate No.5

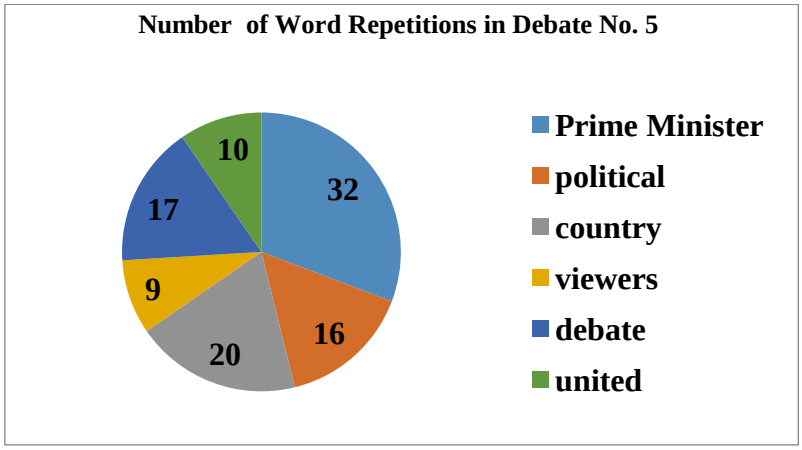


Figure No 8: No. of Word Repetitions in Debate No.6

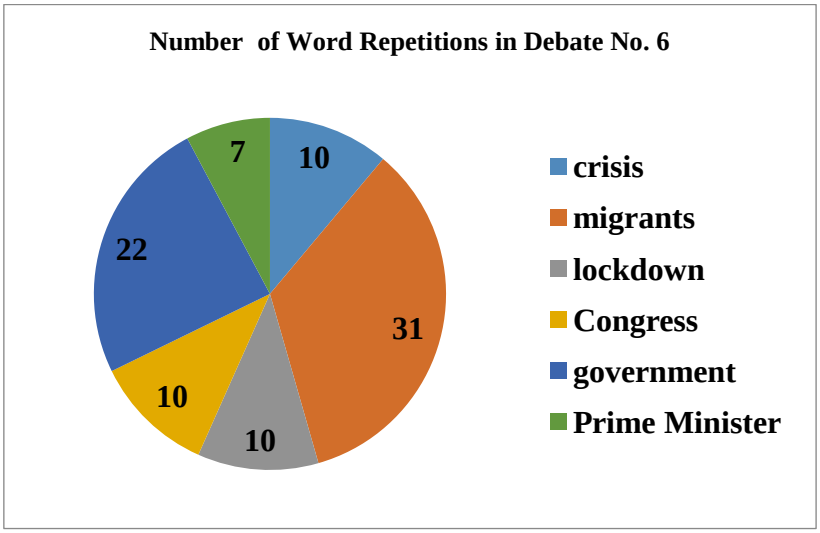


Figure No 9: No. of Word Repetitions in Debate No.7

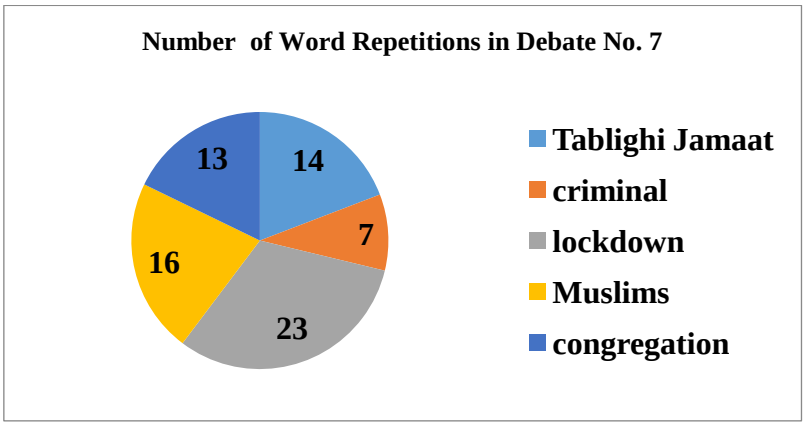


Figure No 10: No. of Word Repetitions in Debate No.8

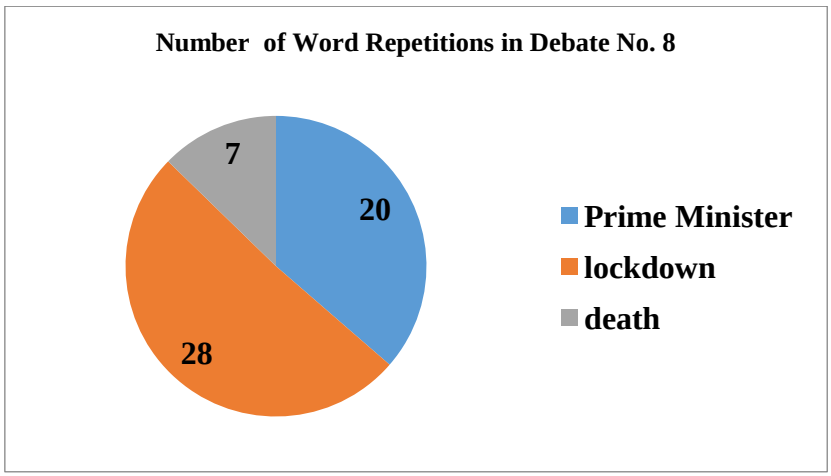


Figure No 11: No. of Word Repetitions in Debate No.9

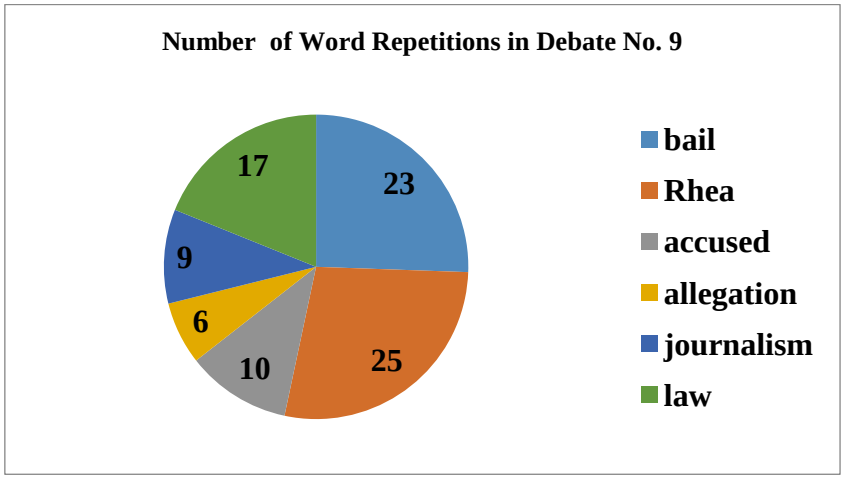
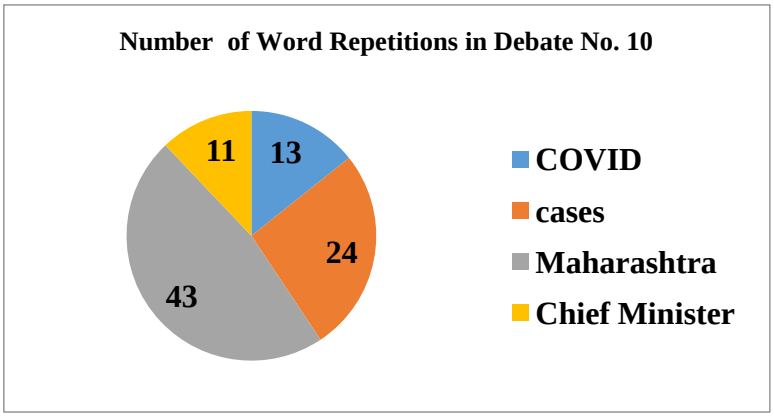


Figure No 12: No. of Word Repetitions in Debate No.10



4.3 LIST OF T.V. DEBATES:

4.3.1 REPUBLIC T.V. (THE DEBATE WITH ARNAB GOSWAMI)

1. Debate No 1: As Sushant's Family Fights For Justice, Mva Slanders Late Actor
2. Debate No 2: Nationwide Search For Tablighi Jamaat Attendees
3. Debate No 3: Pm Modi Announces 21 Day Lockdown To Battle Coronavirus
4. Debate No 4: #Kanganavsuddhav Shiv Sena Celebrates BMC's Demolition Drive
5. Debate No 5: Time To Contain Covid And Rebuild India The Debate With Arnab Goswami

4.3.2 N.D.T.V (LEFT, RIGHT & CENTRE)

1. Debate No 6: Ordeal For Migrants Drags On As Lockdown Extended

2. Debate No 7: Delhi Mosque Coronavirus Scare Criminal Negligence And Excuses
3. Debate No 8: PM Modi Announces Complete Lockdown In India
4. Debate No 9: Rhea Chakraborty Gets Bail Time To Call Out Shoot-And-Scoot Journalism
5. Debate No 10: The Unexplained Maharashtra Covid Surge

4.4 COMPARATIVE PARAMETERS FOR DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In order to compare the debates from Republic T.V. and NDTV the following parameters of discourse analysis have been employed to draw active discussions and conclusions:

1. **Argumentation Strategies:** Anchors often rely on many argumentation strategies in debates for people to agree with them regarding their viewpoints. The strategies may include appeals made through ethos, pathos and logos. Discourse analysis examines how the rhetorical devices are used to create authority or frame arguments to shape the discussion.

   2. Power Dynamics and Control: Anchors in debate often have relative levels of power, influence or authority. The discourse analyst can show instances of power, control over the conversation, such as who controls what is said regarding a topic by silencing others; or dominating. Discourse analysis can be a way to further examine how words reflect and manage ideas by tracking interruptions, or control over a topic, inquiry framing.

3. **Framing of Issues**: The TV anchors and panellist in debates try to depict the issues in such a way as to enhance their arguments. Framing refers to how, by stressing certain attributes of an issue and deemphasizing others, they seek to influence the public's perception and judgment of it. Discourse analysis explores how issues are framed,

what emphasis is placed on particular perspectives, and how such frames impact public opinion.

4. **Use of Metaphor and Figurative Language**: Metaphors, as well as figurative language, is commonly used to make hard matters easy to understand, generate emotions, and sway the target audience in argumentations. Among discourse analysis approaches, metaphor analysis explores how metaphors help an argument gain stronger support and gives abstract ideas more concrete and credible-looking appearances.

5. **Intertextuality:** Intertextuality is that tendency of debates to remind references of previous points of contention, historical events, or other discourses. Discourse analysis studies how such allusions are used to make claims, establish cohesion, or appeal to common beliefs and knowledge of the audience.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

5.1 DISCUSSION

The discussion is based on the five discourse analysis parameters:

- **Based on Argumentation Strategies:** Arguments put forward through prime-time debates of Republic TV and NDTV are in a stark contrast. The prime time debates of Republic TV are very aggressive and confrontational ***(Arnab Goswami: "Shame on all of you", "Don't give me this rubbish about official line", "I don't care for your views on what it is.")*** Often, Arnab Goswami interrupted the panellists in his debates to make points, which makes these shows shallow on analysis and sensationalistic ***(Arnab Goswami: "you listen to me", "Just let me speak", "Maulana, can you be***

quiet for a minute?"& "No, no Ravi you keep quiet.") Debates here often revealed strong bias toward the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Modi government, as there is either pro-BJP or anti-opposition content ***(Arnab Goswami: "I'm proud to say that the Republic Media Network totally, completely, unequivocally, without doubt supports the Prime Minister of India's decision for a 21-day lockdown"; "And ladies and gentlemen, only a leader as decisive like Narendra Modi could do what he did today".)*** Content usually contained sensational headlines and focuses on breaking news, which at times resulted in superficial analysis. The debates of NDTV are much more measured and balanced ***(Sanket Upadhyay: "This is their side of the story. This is the Home Ministry version. It's very important to place both these statements and both these versions for you to judge who is right and who is wrong.")***

Nidhi Razdan, Sanket Upadhyay and Vishnu Som were hosts for these debates that provided the panellists to express his or her view completely ***(Vishnu Som: "I take your point Dr. Bhandari, just trying to rotate the strike, go across to all our panelists this evening."***

In-depth discussion on particular topic and covering multiple dimensions of the issues, that are critical, and do not belong to any particular political ideology. The debates had credible sources, verified facts, and a commitment to transparency ***(Sanket Upadhyay: "An independent study conducted by some professors of University of Michigan they've studied the metadata and they say that most of the engagement were from BJP leaders as well as prominent anchors and fake accounts.")***

These differences significantly shaped the argumentation strategies of Republic TV and NDTV during prime-time debates.

- **Based on Power Dynamics and Control:** Prime-time debates between Republic TV and NDTV are thus heavily influenced by host Arnab Goswami, who completely dominated the discourse and derived it in a particular direction, i.e. the agenda of the editorial team of channel. Debates here were tending to be very violent, and hyper in tone and often eclipse the essence of debate ***(Arnab Goswami: "Sanjay Rao is a shame on Maharashtrian culture", "You are a professional liar", "And we have every right to shout out loud and we will.")***

  Nidhi Razdan, Sanket Upadhyay and Vishnu Som for instance, acted as moderators of NDTV debates and enabled guests to present their arguments fully, which promoted a more balanced exchange of ideas. Respectful dialogue and freedom of diverse viewpoints are thus assured in the show. ***(Nidhi Razdan: "Well, I'd like to go straight across to our panel this evening because what we're really looking at is the plight of migrants...", "Ma'am, but can I just interject here for a second?")***

  Debates are measured, in-depth and focused on issues, using quality sources and factual information verified. This means they were balanced both in terms of power dynamics as well as knowledgeable audiences ***(Vishnu Som: "Let's bring up these graphics, take a look at the situation in China;" "We've got details right now which have come in of the National Disaster Management Authority Act having been invoked in the country.")***

  This difference in the control exerted by hosts in terms of tone and approach gave great shape to power dynamics and control in both Republic TV and NDTV during prime time debates. Such difference in approaches reflects the editorial standpoints and philosophies of news channels.

- **Based on Framing of Issues:** Republic TV and NDTV frame prime-time debates with different approaches. Republic TV, in particular, was very partial towards the

Modi government and Bharatiya Janata Party, and most debates criticized opposition parties and their performances ***(Arnab Goswami: "This is time for collective action. Not cheap politics… And what has your Rahul Gandhi done?", "What a shame, Uddhav Thackeray.")***

NDTV, on the other hand, has a balanced and measured approach, where facilitators such as Nidhi Razdan, Sanket Upadhyay and Vishnu Som facilitated discussions that gave guests an opportunity to present their arguments fully ***(Nidhi Razdan: "Sorry to cut you off. I just want to get Sakina in on this because what your organization, Sakina, has put together is very worrying; I'll come back to you, ma'am. Just give me a second.")*** The debates mainly argued in terms of respect for dialogue and a platform that allowed differences to be heard. NDTV provided more comprehensive, in-depth and measured analyses, with a high quality of content, as the sources appeared credible, verified facts of information were coming out with regards to transparency, in-depth analysis, with much emphasis on the detailed analysis, the opinions of experts, and long-term implications of issues of concern ***(Nidhi Razdan: "These are the numbers that have come out today from Tamil Nadu and from Madhya Pradesh at 2:59." Sanket Upadhyay: "So this is a graph that you see, India is about to approach one lakh cases per day mark.")*** Such framing differences revealed the respective editorial stance and journalistic philosophies of Republic TV and NDTV that go on to influence how issues are presented and debated during their prime-time debates.

- Based on Use of Metaphor and Figurative Language: In terms of prime-time debates, the two use very different metaphors and figures. The more aggressive and

confrontational metaphors employed by Republic TV have used war and battle imagery in its quests for creating urgency and polarization, sometimes used a more binary metaphor such as portraying politicians as heroes or villains and sustaining pro-government bias ***(Arnab Goswami: "Do you remember what Uddhav Thackeray said? He wanted to hit Modi with a stick", "Let's make Prime Minister Modi feel that we are backing him all the way in our best interest in this battle against COVID.")***

NDTV presented balanced and measured metaphors as constructive and cooperative imagery, the problem-solving archetype, and an evidence-based discussion ***(Sanket Upadhyay: " Snigdha on Twitter says, they didn't think it was important to come out and tell the Tamil Nadu government that they were having symptoms;" Let me show you a bar graph, take a look at that graph right at the top, the bar right at the top.")*** Another subtle and contextual form of metaphor appeared in terms of "navigating challenges," "balancing interests," and "weighing options" to establish a nuanced level of understanding for these complex issues ***(Sanket Upadhyay: "I am repeating this again and again and again. The worst thing to do or present to the people of this country is a Hindu-Muslim debate. This is not a Hindu-Muslim debate; If this is a lackadaisical attitude by the cops or by the administration, then that is also wrong.")***

- **Based on Intertextuality:** Republic TV and NDTV prime-time debates are different in how they make references and incorporate other texts and media sources. Republic TV has used heavy integration with social media by hashtag promotion where it encouraged a particular hashtag associated with debate topics on Twitter ***(Arnab Goswami: "The hashtag today is stay united India", "Let's come together viewers***

and close to 30,000 WhatsApp messages as a response to our campaign hashtag CBI for SSR.") This has encouraged the audience of social media to take part in discussions and debates that have been broadcast, hence a reciprocation of information between the television show and online media. This selection of topics on the show seems to be correlated with the social media posts by party workers, thereby showing dynamic interplay between traditional media and online platforms.

Republic TV employed militant and aggressive and polemical language and turned many political controversies into a matter of war, war rhetoric to emphasize urgency, to polarize and focus mainly on conflict situations, controversy riddled with its intertextuality ***(quoting Nitish Katara's Murder & Jiah Khan's suicide with Sushant Singh Rajput Case.)*** In stark contrast, NDTV assumed a delicate balance, positive imagery of collective endeavor, rational discussion and contextual rather than absolute use of references ***(Sanket Upadhyay: "I am not going to demonize an entire community or enter into a discourse where people on television are demonizing an entire community because of what has happened in Nizamuddin. (15:56) It is not fair and it is not correct. (15:58) And it is not even logical.")*** These differences in intertextuality mirror the stance taken by their editors and reflect the tone of discourse between Republic TV and NDTV and thus define how issues are framed and deliberated on their prime-time debates.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The mainstream media use a variety of rhetorical techniques to influence the audience. These elements have their origins in classical rhetoric and have been modified for use in contemporary communication techniques. The following forms illustrate the leading manner in which mainstream media make use of rhetorical strategies for persuasion:

Mainstream media usually draws on authoritative sources, experts, and credible institutions to establish their trust with the audience. Quoting famous scholars, government officials, or politicians in the field is also a part of this ***(Vishnu Som:"Based on what the Prime Minister said a little while back, it is 1.3 billion Indians.")*** By incorporating repetitive words in the debate content in a way that reflects societal standards and moral principles, media appeal to the ethical sensibilities of the audience ***(Arnab Goswami: "Ridiculous, filthy, attack, shame on you, etc".)*** This includes issues of public discourse.

Use of emotionally charged words and vivid descriptions, the media produces sensational feelings like fear, anger, sympathy, or joy ***(Arnab Goswami: "The weakest tonight are the people who show their fake biceps", " These people are terrorists", "Do you think we are fools?")*** Emotional feelings on the audience's part create a higher propensity to accept the message.

Use of sound reason based on fact, statistics, and other forms of evidence, mainstream media persuade the audience ***(Sanket Upadhyay: "Some facts on your screen right now.")*** Argumentations emerge logically from the evidence such that it becomes obvious and logical ***(Nidhi Razdan: "Honestly, can we not have a more constructive way for the political class in this country to work together? If the opposition is able to give a constructive suggestion or any, does everything have to be seen with contempt?")*** This enables the media to explain complicated matters in simple language, both as an information-providing agent and a convincing one, to make the public understand the issue through comparison to their everyday experience ***(Arnab Goswami read out the 9-page letter written by Sushant Singh Rajput's Father in the debate.)***

Through the use of rhetorical elements of ethos, pathos and logos the mainstream media anchors persuade panellist to coincide with the channels agenda ***(Agenda Setting theory)*** and hence sway public opinion on a particular issue.

As the two-step theory suggests the public discourses are greatly influenced by debates of opinion makers as a credible source of information on particular issue. The Republic TV and NDTV, with austere differences and biases have taken different approaches. Of the two channels, Republic TV debates distinctively seem to favour the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Modi government, criticizing almost 50% of its political debates focused against the opposition ***(Arnab Goswami: "These people don't want a solution. They want an anti-Narendra Modi narrative", "If Uddhav Thackeray wants to put me in jail, he's welcome.")***

NDTV, on the other hand has a balanced and less biased content of topics ranging from politics and international affairs, economy, health, and society which aligns most of the public discourses ***(Nidhi Razdan: "Can we not talk about 60 years? Can we not go back to the same argument about 60 years?")***

Republic TV in particular regularly emphasized important points and strengthened its arguments by using parallelism, repetition, and rhetorical questions ***(Arnab Goswami: Why are they hiding?", "answer my question.")*** For instance, it emphasized the government's efforts and frequently questioned the opposition's capacity to manage the pandemic in the debates. ***(Arnab Goswami: "This government is a joke, that too a cruel joke, on the people of the state. . .")***

The debates on Republic TV and NDTV during the 2020 pandemic had a varied level of bias, tone, and focus. Republic TV employed aggressive rhetoric to promote the government's narrative while bashing the opposition. The topics discussed on the debates were mainly being posted in social media by BJP supporters, demonstrating a dynamic interaction between rhetoric and public discourse.

NDTV debates during the pandemic were less opinionated, touching upon all kinds of issues that prevailed in the public discourses. In fact, their in-depth analyses and investigations

supported the claims of data and facts ***(Vishnu Som: "But I want to just show this graphic first." Sanket Upadhyay: "Let's quickly take a look at what the court has observed. ")*** It covered a wide range of issues, including the government's handling of the health crisis, economic challenges, as well as social issues.

REFERENCES:

1. Han Zhang, Qiongyu Zhu, Yajuan Zhu, *A Study of Mainstream Media Communication and Audience Participatory Culture Based on Multimodal Analysis Approach*, Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences, 9(1) (2024) 1-13 ISSN 2444-8656.
2. Deacon, D., Smith, D., & Wring, D. (2024). *Why mainstream news media still matter*. *Media, Culture & Society*, 46(4), 874-885.
3. Zuowei Zhao, *The Study of Public Opinion Guidance and Media Rationality of Mainstream Media in the Media Convergence Environment*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, Volume (124.)
4. Salaudeen, M. A., Onyechi, N., & Topic, M. (2020). *Digital media vs mainstream media: Exploring the influences of media exposure and information preference as correlates of media credibility*, *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, *7*(1).
5. Neary, C., & Ringrow, H. (2018) *Media, Power and representation*. In P. Seargeant, A. Hewings, & S. Pihlaja (Eds.), The Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies (pp. 294-309). London: Routledge.
6. McQuail, D. (1991) '*Mass Media in the Public Interest: Towards a Framework of Norms for Media Performance*', in J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds.) *Mass Media and Society*, London: Edward Arnold, pages 68–81.
7. Steen Steensen, Tine U. Figenschou& Karoline A. Ihlebæk (2023) *Playing the Mainstream Game. A Language-Game Analysis of "Mainstream" as a Possible Boundary Object in Journalism Studies*, Digital Journalism, 11:4, 653-671
8. Gordon, F. (2018). *The Significance and Impact of the Media in Contemporary Society. In: Children, Young People and the Press in a Transitioning Society*. Palgrave Socio-Legal Studies. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-60682-2_2
9. Devereux, E. (2007) *Understanding the Media* (Second Edition), London: SAGE Publications Limited.
10. C. Himsworth, K. Byers, et al. (n.d.) *THE MISSION, THE MESSAGE, AND THE MEDIUM*, 3.3 Mainstream Media – The Mission, the Message, and the Medium (bccampus.ca), Retrieved on 17 May 2024, 16:16 PM IST
11. Reiter, F., &Matthes, J. (2023). *Correctives of the Mainstream Media? A Panel Study on Mainstream Media Use, Alternative Digital Media Use, and the Erosion of Political Interest as Well as Political Knowledge*, *Digital Journalism*, *11*(5), 813–832.
12. Gross, L. (1992) '*Out of the Mainstream: Sexual Minorities and the Mass Media*', *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*, Routledge, pages 130–149.
13. Hall, S. (1997) '*Discourse, Power and the Subject*', *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, SAGE Publications Limited, pages 41–74.
14. Mahar Muhammad Ahmad Afzal, Dr.Tanveer Hussain, Dr.NasimIshaq. *Viewership And Credibility of News Mainstream and Social Media: An Analysis Of Public Perception Of district Bahawalpur*-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 20 (1), 484-498. ISSN 1567-214x
15. Michael Meyen*The mainstream media are the problem Why the counter-discourse might help journalism* HERBERT VON HALEM VERLAG Journalism Research 2020, Vol 3 (3) p. 247-258 ISSN 2569-152X

16. Couldry, Nick (2012): *Media, Society, World. Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
17. Luhmann, Niklas (1996): Die *Realität der Massenmedien.* 2. Auflage. Opladen: West deutscherVerlag.
18. Landerer& Nino (2013) *Rethinking the logics: A conceptual framework for the mediatization of politics* Communication Theory, 23(3), pp. 239-258.
19. Dewey & John (1927) *The Public and its Problems* New York: Holt.
20. *What Is The Media And How Does It Work*
21. (2010) GDNET Research Communications: Mombasa Media Workshop
22. Oberiri Destiny Apuke (2016) *Social and Traditional Mainstream Media of Communication: Synergy and Variance Perspective* New Media and Mass Communication www.iiste.org ISSN 2224-3267 (Paper) ISSN 2224-3275 (Online) Vol.53.
23. Rabia Noor (2017) *Citizen Journalism vs. Mainstream Journalism: A Study on Challenges Posed by Amateurs Athens* Journal of Mass Media and Communications Volume 3, Issue 1 – Pages 55-76
24. Julia Cagé, Nicolas Hervé, BéatriceMazoyer (2022) *Social Media Influence Mainstream Media: Evidence from Two Billion Tweets* hal-03877907
25. Teresa S. Welsh, Melissa S. Wright, (2010) *Information Literacy in the Digital Age*
26. Dr.Jagadish JR and Dr.Nagendra (2016) *The Impact of New Media onTraditional Mainstream Mass Media* INDIAN JOURNAL OF APPLIED RESEARCH X 411 Volume : 6 | Issue : 1 | JANUARY 2016 | ISSN - 2249-555X
27. Reiter, F., &Matthes, J. (2021) *Correctives of the Mainstream Media? A Panel Study on Mainstream Media Use, Alternative Digital Media Use, and the Erosion of Political Interest as Well as Political Knowledge*Digital Journalism, *11*(5), 813–832. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1974916
28. Kenix, L. J. 2011. *Alternative and Mainstream Media: The Converging Spectrum*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
29. Haller, A., and K. Holt. 2019. "Paradoxical Populism: How PEGIDA Relates to Mainstream and Alternative Media." Information Communication and Society 22 (12): 1665–1680.
30. Boyle, M. P., and M. Schmierbach. 2009. "Media Use and Protest: The Role of Mainstream and Alternative Media Use in Predicting Traditional and Protest Participation." Communication Quarterly 57 (1): 1–17.
31. Rauch, J. (2015). Exploring the alternative–mainstream dialectic: What 'alternative media' means to a hybrid audience. Communication, Culture & Critique, *8*(1), 124–143. doi: 10.1111/cccr.12068
32. Wolover, D. (2016). An issue of attribution: The Tunisian revolution, media interaction, and agency. New Media & Society, *18*(2), 185–200. doi: 10.1177/1461444814541216
33. Atton, C. (2006). Far-right media on the internet: culture, discourse and power. New Media & Society, 8(4), 573-587. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444806065653
34. Wetherell, Margaret and Jonathan Potter (1992) *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the Legitimation of Exploitation*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
35. Kramer, B. (2014). Media populism: A conceptual clarification and some theses on its effects. Communication Theory, *24*(1), 42–60. doi: 10.1111/comt.12029
36. Miles, D.A. and Scott, L. (2017) *Workshop: Confessions of a Dissertation Chair Part 1: The Six Mistakes Doctoral Students Make With the Dissertation* Presented at the 5th Annual 2017 Black Doctoral Network Conference in Atlanta, GA on October 26-29 2017.